1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

never to have had any large-scale central political organization, and their history is full of occasions when one group of Yao has attacked another. Even within his own area the authority of the chief was not, apparently, sufficiently strong to prevent one village headman from raiding his neighbours; the chief maintained no standing army.[1] The chief held certain rights and privileges. He was entitled to the ground tusk of any elephant found in his territory (the finder was rewarded after it had been sold, with a cloth); he received tribute in food,[2] with which he entertained visitors. He took a share of the spoils of war and was also entitled to annual labour service and to a gift when he made a new burial place. Apart from his military and judicial responsibilities, he had authority to settle when and where initiation ceremonies should be held.[3] The right to hold these ceremonies was sought after by the village headmen as a mark of status.[4] The chiefs or headmen of certain families had the right to wear a white cloth bound round their temples as insignia of rank.[5]

In addition the chief had a certain ritual status. He was thought to incur mystical danger by contact with death, and so was not allowed to attend a funeral nor to eat a chicken brought by a messenger announcing a death, nor to accompany his military expeditions. He was supposed to have great power through special medicines. He had to make offerings to the ancestors, especially in affairs concerning the whole people, such as drought or epidemic. He was expected to give a burial cloth at the death of an important man. At his death a period of social disorganization was recognized, members of his village were allowed to pillage and rape, until he was buried.

Succession to the chiefly office was matrilineal. The chief's position was based partly on his status as the senior male of his own matrilineal kin group, partly on his wealth. His command over slaves, guns, and caravans to the coast was greater than that of others, and from these his military strength was derived, for a chief was powerless without his following of dependents. The chief of the area was also headman of his own village. In fact, the position and duties of a village headman (except that he could not exact tribute)[6] reproduced in small scale those of the chief. The headmen also were in mystical danger through contact with death and were the channel through which the ancestors were approached in affairs concerning the village. They, too, built up their prestige and wealth by slaving activities. They seem to have been largely independent of the chief, carrying on slave raids of their own, and if they could gain a sufficient following, they might break away from the chief, and set up their own chiefdoms.[7]

The chief ruled through a hierarchy of headmen. His councillors were superior headmen, placed over a number of village headmen. Commoners could approach the chief only through the councillor in whose area their village belonged. The councillor's special duties were to report daily to the chief on the affairs of his district, to advise, and to arbitrate in the chief's own domestic affairs, e.g. in conflicts between the chief and his brothers and nephews. The councillors were not necessarily relatives of the chief,[8] but were chosen on account of their general status in the community, and their

[1] Elmslie, 4, 1899, p. 105, says of the Yao in the Shire highlands: 'Every tenth man one met might be set down as a chief . . . petty quarrels of petty chiefs were abundant. . . .' See Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, pp. 169 and 154.
[2] Stannus, 4, 1922, says that only beer was owed to him.
[3] Ibid., p. 279.
[4] Duff, 1903, p. 312.
[5] Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, p. 16; Werner, 1906, p. 260.
[6] Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, p. 153.
[7] Ibid., pp. 32 and 156.
[8] Ibid., p. 156.